

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: July 9, 2014

6:00pm-8:00pm

Location: City Hall, Boards and Commissions Room (L280)

Members Present: Lydia Heard, Jeffrey Linn, Lillian Berticevich, Joanne Donohue, Jennifer Oligero, Ninona Boujrada, David Goldberg, Lorena Kaplan

Attendees: Howard Wu, James Kelly (Office of Economic Development), SDOT: Elizabeth Weber, Emily Spahn, Melody Berry, Barbara Gray, Brian de Place, Ken Ewalt, Michael James

MEETING CALL TO ORDER: 6:03 pm

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL: June meeting minutes approved

PUBLIC COMMENT: none

PRESENTATIONS

Time: 6:08pm

Topic: *Access Seattle Initiative and Construction Hub Program*

Presenters: Melody Berry & Brian de Place, SDOT

- Access Seattle is a program that developed from Urban Streets and Forestry when construction in Seattle began to ramp up at a fast pace. Some areas with a high proximity of development (“construction hubs”) needed a more focused communication and coordination between contractors, local community groups, businesses, etc.
 - About a year ago, a follow-up discussion took place, and this feedback was used to develop the Construction Hub program.
- At the beginning of 2014, the Downtown Seattle Association identified over 40 private construction projects, and now there are over 100. There has been a huge increase in the number of projects going on within the past few years, which has made problems harder to manage.
- Construction hubs are identified, and the idea is to work across private and public agencies, beginning early.
- Ex: Capitol Hill- in last 6 months, have cleared up key corridors between 15th and I5, keeping E and W corridors open. Cap Hill is one of highest pedestrian activity areas, so it’s important to preserve mobility there.
- 3 pillars of the Construction Hub program: construction coordination, traveler engagement, business and community support
 - Construction Coordination: there is a catcher for information in the office and in the field for each project
 - Traveler Engagement: need to give people actionable engagement, and are working on creating an app to map out these construction hub areas
 - Lorena: is part of the goal to train people not to use the app while walking or driving?
 - Hopefully people will open up the app beforehand. That is a good reminder about training for responsible use.
 - Joanne: Are there any requirements for maintaining ped. access during

- construction?
- There are a combination of things. Our plan is to take a step back and see the big picture of all these small projects.
 - Jeffrey: Are there any policy decisions guiding you?
 - In 2008, Councilmember Licata asked for best practices related to ped areas around construction and closing access, leading to policy decisions. These policies were cleared up in the municipal code. They had SPAB feedback then, but then recession hit and there were fewer projects. Now, they're looking more at the *entire* corridor rather than an individual project, which was what the policy addressed. Now they're considering the phase of construction and type of street (when you can put up scaffolding, etc.). They'd like to engage SPAB about the policies.
 - They also have fees related to construction impacting the right of way
 - Lydia: How do you decide when to block a sidewalk travel lane or vehicle travel lane?
 - Brian: Often, construction needs to be staged on the sidewalk because it's closer to the site. But, there are other options. One factor is about bus routes.
 - Site-specific considerations: trees, tree canopies, overhead power lines, street furniture. Sometimes contractors are required to have flaggers.
 - Ex.: Part of the new plan includes considering when to involve flaggers, such as on 1st and Stewart. These flaggers have created a much safer pedestrian environment. SDOT is not afraid to bargain with the contractors, and are having these discussions way in advance
 - Business and Community Support: they want to make sure businesses near construction sites understand impacts. James Kelly is making sure businesses have a voice.
 - They consider how sidewalk and street closure impacts revenues. Loss of parking impacts businesses, too. They encourage free parking behind businesses and also focus on noise mitigation.
 - Based on feedback from Thrive Café on 65th and Roosevelt, they made sure to open up the sidewalk to help the business.
 - One big "lesson learned" was from when jackhammers were in front of yoga studio.
 - How do they help with way-finding? Identifying specific businesses, not simply having an "Open During Business" sign. Creating a wayfinding map with info about the project. They are working with many business associations, partly via social media. It's very important that businesses know who to call when they have an issue.
 - Lydia: Are social media maps being integrated into this program?
 - Brian: Hopefully. There is a data need, certainly. Part of the work this year is to integrate a lot of these different tools- listservs, etc. Part of this is trial and error; we know it's important to people to have a predictable route, especially those w/ visual impairment, and we're not where we need to be yet.
 - If something doesn't work right, they want to know. Call them.
 - Lorena: What is your response time?
 - Quick; they know who can make what decisions, and have enforcement capacity. Response times now are quicker than before because they've cut out the middleman.
 - Lily: Where does the funding for your program come from? Are there any restrictions or specifications?
 - Street use: almost 100% revenue-supported. They charge rates to recover

the costs. They've escalated right of way use fees (paid for by contractors), for example, to be able to support their team. They have to navigate that process with the City Council to increase fees. Using fees from contractors works best for them.

- Since 2013, they've wanted to increase their team. They'd like another business relations manager, to focus more on communications and marketing, and are asking Council for a budget for communications specialist. They believe the program warrants that. They've added three permanent positions this year. As volumes increase, they'll need to have bigger team. Other things that could make their program more efficient include tablets for updating real-time information.
- The program requires weekly coordination meetings, which has been extremely valuable. Stakeholders receive the information from these meetings.
- Lorena: You should look at crime statistics while rerouting.
- Jeffrey: Sometimes I don't get to a "closed sidewalk" sign until mid-block, where it's less safe to cross.
 - Closed Access signs are required at each *end* of the block.
- Jeffrey: What about signs that say the *timing* of sidewalk or street closure?
 - This would be helpful. Also, lists saying who is supposed to be on site and when are helpful for businesses.
- Lydia: Are businesses *and* residents included in your outreach?
 - So far businesses have been mostly interested in this.
- Lorena: When rerouting in areas frequented by small kids, do you look at whether the rerouted area is more dangerous (with more cars/parking lot)?
 - We do look at this. We try to keep path as close to initial walkway as possible.
- SDOT will send the 2008 director's rule that shows the priorities, and would be happy to come back and talk about that.

Time: 7:02 pm

Topic: Integrated Multimodal Plan for Mt. Baker Station

Presenters: Michael James, SDOT

- Michael is part of the Policy and Planning group at SDOT. They are working on creating a multimodal plan around the Mt. Baker light rail station, which will probably be done within the next 1-1.5 years.
- There was a recent celebration for a newly opened commercial space near the station, which was the first foothold for new development in that area.

BACKGROUND

- Mayor McGinn was worried about boarded up properties, closed businesses, etc. They created a TOD interdepartmental team project w/ DPD, SDOT, OH, and the Dept. of Neighborhoods. They first looked at Othello station and wanted to release an RFP for something in that area. Now, there will be affordable housing on the NE site of station.
- Project emphasis: recommend safety improvement, overall ped. safety.
- The area around Mt. Baker had major changes and was converted into one-way area. There is an overarching transportation plan that's essentially in limbo; SDOT never approved or disapproved it.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- On-the-ground, quick safety improvements: crossing improvements (short-term) for bikers and pedestrians
- Integrated multimodal plan: will include freight, long-term development (how can it be

phased over time?), addressing the “bow-tie” concept that is in limbo. The community is upset about general up zones- increased height limits and are worried about development not fitting the design.

SCOPE OF WORK

- They received proposals from 6 consultant teams, and have narrowed the selection down to 2 firms.
- They’ve defined a generic scope of work with 3 community engagement elements to listen to the community’s concerns, are identifying safety improvements, will create a multi-modal long-term plan.
- David: What will the plan look like when you’re done?
 - We’re envisioning a phased approach for when certain activities will happen. Ex: incorporating a project that will relocate a bus transit center to the west side, adjacent to the center. They have to grapple with huge trees, which are tearing up the sidewalks. As we re-envision the streetscapes, do we plan around the trees, raise the streetscapes, etc.?
- Both firms have proposed design charettes for the community. There are many concerns about the area and the community wants to be involved in the process.
- For Michael, to come back to Seattle and see Mt. Baker is disappointing because the station is great but the ped. area around the station was forgotten about. Many cities require improvements ¼ mile around a new station. Here, that radius was completely forgotten about. Now his job gives him the chance to improve it.
- David: what do you mean about reconsidering the “bow-tie”?
 - A 1-way 3 lane arterial is not the right solution. Cars are moving too fast, this is too auto-focused. (It’s about, “how many cars can you fit in this area?”)
 - Reconsidering means throwing out that idea, or reworking it. We have a new traffic mgmt. division. They’re willing to try new things and are very progressive. They’re working with NACTO and street design guidelines.
 - David: We’d love to give feedback on the interim designs.
 - Yes, I’d love to come back when they’re ready.
- Lydia: DPD upzone proposal- has this been done successfully in a high zone area?
 - We’re planning to focus on certain things.
 - SBAP: Dongho said we’ll have to go with MUTCD over NACTO. Is this true?
 - Yes, so you have to get an exemption to work around it.
- On 23rd, road diet: the bus has a hard time moving back into traffic. The way this new idea would work: bus pulls forward and triggers lights to turn yellow and red to it can easily pull back out onto the street. There will be ways to test this idea.
 - Lorena: Sometimes bus drivers wait for people, others don’t. If there’s a trigger system, will buses stop for you if you run? Could this create more danger for pedestrians?
 - It hasn’t been designed yet.
 - Lorena: There should either be more education for pedestrians or bus driver standardization.

Time: 6:39 pm

Topic: Board business: Work Plan and reporting

- Howard: received an email from director’s office. We can meet the new director. SPAB has previously had a meet and greet, basically, during regular meeting time.
- Lydia: Should we also wait for board planning until after we meet with him? It might be best to wait for the regular fall retreat to plan.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT: 7:52pm